Daily News
ESTABLISHED 1911

Police accused of stalling release of RFK death files

By JEFF SNYDER
Daily News Staff Writer

A former political campaign adviser to Robert F. Kennedy accused the Los Angeles Police Commission Wednesday of stalling the release of investigative files into the 1968 assassination of the senator.

"You have been using every legal means to obstruct us in getting them," said Paul Schrade. "I have grave concerns about the intent of the commission."

Schrade and several other people who have requested some 50,000 pages of documents involving the June 5, 1968, killing of Kennedy appeared before the commission to protest delays in releasing the files.

"This is on its way to becoming a national disgrace in terms of public disclosure," said Philip Melanson, a director of the Robert Kennedy Assassination Archive at Southeastern Massachusetts University.

The commission agreed last year to release an edited version of the 1,500-page investigative summary and to study the disclosure of the remaining files in the case.

However, no information has been released since then.

The possibility that more than 1 assassin shot RFK is raised

Commission president Robert M. Talcott said he hopes that "a certain portion of the materials" will be released on March 4 along with a plan for the phased disclosure of the massive investigation.

Commission vice president Barbara L. Schlei apologized for the delay in releasing the 10-volume summary.

"We have been too slow but I would like to assure you that to the best of my knowledge there has been no coverup; there has been no coverup," she said.

Schrade, Melanson and Gregory Stone, a former aide to Congressman Allard K. Lowenstein, submitted a proposal for the phased release of the Kennedy files that would be implemented by the commission with the participation of a panel of experts.

Most of the files could be reviewed and released within two years, according to the proposal.

Schrade was wounded in the head when convicted assassin Sirhan B. Sirhan opened fire on Kennedy after the presidential candidate gave his victory speech at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles the night of the Democratic primary.

"I was a victim of that shooting," Schrade said. "I want (the documents) and other people want them because there are unanswered questions about the case."

Among those questions, he said, is the possibility that more than one assassin shot Kennedy as he walked through the kitchen area of the hotel.

Schrade told commissioners that the police version of his shooting doesn't match ballistics simulation of the event.

"The simulation shows that bullet could not have ended up in my head if it passed through Robert Kennedy's coat as stated," he said.

Outside the commission meeting, Schrade termed the police summary "practically meaningless" but he said release of those documents would be the beginning of the process of disclosing the raw investigative files.